

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THE HA 00980 262115Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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S E C R E T THE HAGUE 0980

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJ: F-104 REPLACEMENT: DEFENSE MINISTER VREDELING
REQUESTS MEETING WITH SEC. DEF.

FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FROM AMBASSADOR GOULD

FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL

SUMMARY: DEFENSE MINISTER VREDELING MET WITH DCM
AND ME PRIVATELY AT HIS INITIATIVE TO SPELL OUT HIS
CONCEPTUAL APPROACH AND CONCERNS RE THE F-104
REPLACEMENT QUESTION AND TO EXPRESS KEEN DESIRE FOR A
QTE TALK IT OUT UNQTE MEETING WITH YOU (SECDEF)
PRIOR TO THE IMPORTANT AND PERHAPS CRUCIAL DUTCH
CABINET MEETING ON MARCH 14. I STRONGLY RECOMMEND
THAT YOU ACCOMMODATE HIS REQUEST FOR A MEETING AS
VREDELING HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHAT RECOMMENDATION
TO MAKE TO THE CABINET AND OBVIOUSLY SETS HIGH VALUE
ON YOUR VIEWS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN AN UNUSUAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER OF DEFENSE
VREDELIING, WHO HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO MEET
WITH GOVERNMENT OR BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE
COUNTRIES CONTENDING FOR THE LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER SALE
EXPRESSED INTEREST YESTERDAY IN MEETING PRIVATELY WITH US.
ALBERT SLIGTING, MOD INFORMATION CHIEF, WHO LAST WEEK GAVE
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SECRET

PAGE 02 THE HA 00980 262115Z

US WHAT PROVED TO BE AN ACCURATE INSIGHT INTO VREDELING'S

THINKING (THE HAGUE 905), SERVED AS INTERMEDIARY IN MAKING THE ARRANGEMENTS. RESULTING MEETING BETWEEN VREDELING, DCM, AND ME TOOK PLACE LAST NIGHT (FEB. 25) OVER DRINKS AND DINNER AT THE RESIDENCE.

2. VREDELING WITH HIS CHARACTERISTICALLY FRANK AND UNORTHODOX APPROACH CANDIDLY RAISED AND DISCUSSED ALL THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE LWF SELECTION MATTER WHICH ARE TROUBLING HIM. HIS MAJOR CONCERN, TO WHICH HE FREQUENTLY RETURNS IS A DESIRE NOT TO ACT IN A WAY WHICH WILL BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE EVENTUAL PRODUCTION OF A TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED EUROPEAN MILITARY PLANE BY A EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY STANDING ON ITS OWN FEET.

3. VREDELING WILLINGLY CONCEDED THE TECHNICAL SUPERIORITY OF THE YF-16 AND HE EXPRESSED NO INTEREST PER SE IN BUYING THE MIRAGE. FURTHERMORE, HE EXPRESSED NO PARTICULAR INTEREST IN ACQUIRING A CHEAPER, LIGHTER PLANE (SUCH AS THE F-5E TIGER) AS STATE SECRETARY STEMERDINK AND PARLIAMENTARIAN DANKERT HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING.

4. HE MENTIONED THAT HE FELT HIS STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT WHICH HAD BEEN LOCALLY TREATED BY THE PRESS AS PRO-MIRAGE WAS NOT PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD: WHAT HE HAD TRIED TO SAY WAS THAT EUROPE MUST EVENTUALLY DEVELOP ITS OWN PLANE CAPACITY. SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO THE PROBLEM OF REPLACING THE NETHERLANDS' 100 NF-55--WHICH WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED IN THE MID-1980S ABOUT FIVE YEARS AFTER THE STARFIGHTERS--HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THEY WOULD BE REPLACED BY A EUROPEAN PLANE. HOWEVER, HE IS AFRAID THAT ONCE THE NETHERLANDS STARTS DOWN THE YF-16 PATH FOR THE STARFIGHTERS QTE EUROPE WILL GO TO SLEEP UNQTE IN DEVELOPING A EUROPEAN PLANE AND THE GON WILL THEREFORE HAVE TO REPLACE ITS NF-55 WITH AN AMERICAN PLANE ALSO, NO EUROPEAN PLANE HAVING BEEN DEVELOPED IN THE INTERIM.

5. VREDELING INDICATED THAT ON MARCH 14 A CABINET MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE AT WHICH TIME HE IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A FIRM RECOMMENDATION ON THE LWF CHOICE. IT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 THE HA 00980 262115Z

APPEARED OBVIOUS TO US THAT HE HAS NOT YET CRYSTALLIZED HIS THINKING.

6. RESPONDING TO VREDELING, WE EMPHASIZED THAT SELECTION OF THE YF-16 TO REPLACE THE STARFIGHTERS WAS NOT AT ALL INCONSISTENT WITH DEVELOPMENT OF A EUROPEAN PLANE CAPACITY; FIRST, BECAUSE GREAT TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES WOULD FLOW FROM THE U.S. TO EUROPE, AND SECOND, BECAUSE THE U.S. OFFER

CALLS NOT FOR SUB-CONTRACTING BUT FOR GENUINE CO-PRODUCTION WHICH ENVISAGES TWO EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY LINES. WE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. IN INTERESTS OF RATIONALIZATION AND SPECIALIZATION WAS PRESENTLY PURCHASING THE ROLAND MISSILE AND WAS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBLE ACQUISITION OF OTHER EUROPEAN MANUFACTURED ARMAMENTS SUCH AS THE LEOPARD TANK.

7. VREDELING THEN EXPRESSED KEEN INTEREST IN MEETING WITH YOU TO REVIEW IN DEPTH ALL THESE VARIOUS FACTORS AND-- IMPLICIT IN HIS REQUEST--TO HEAR YOUR ADVICE ON HOW HE SHOULD FORMULATE HIS RECOMMENDATION TO THE DUTCH CABINET. HE SAID HE WAS AVAILABLE TO TRAVEL AT ANY TIME WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AND WILLING TO ACCOMMODATE TO YOUR SCHEDULE, ADDING HE WAS QTE READY TO LEAVE TONIGHT UNQTE. I REPLIED THAT I WOULD RELAY HIS REQUEST AND GIVE HIM A PROMPT REPLY.

8. VREDELING HAS BEEN CIRCUMSPECT IN AVOIDING CONTACTS WITH THE CONTENDERS. THE FACT THAT HE APPROACHED US AND NOW WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO SEE YOU WE CONSIDER A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT AND ONE WHICH GIVES A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY TO HELP HIM MAKE UP HIS MIND IN FAVOR OF THE YF-16. HE OBVIOUSLY VALUES YOUR OPINION AND COUNSEL HIGHLY. STILL UNCOMMITTED AND FACED WITH THE NECESSITY OF ADOPTING A POSITION BEFORE THE UPCOMING CABINET MEETING, HE IS SEARCHING FOR HELP TO FIND FIRM GROUND ON WHICH TO BASE A LOGICAL RECOMMENDATION FOR THE LWF REPLACEMENT WHICH WOULD SOMEHOW ADVANCE THE PROSPECTS--OR AT LEAST, NOT HINDER THEM,-FOR AN EVENTUAL EUROPEAN PLANE. WE BELIEVE WE MADE PROGRESS LAST NIGHT BUT HE STILL NEEDS MORE CONVINCING.

9 RECOMMENDATION: I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT AT YOUR
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 THE HA 00980 262115Z

EARLIEST CONVENIENCE YOU ACCOMMODATE VREDELING'S DESIRE TO SEE YOU, AND THAT YOU TAKE THE OCCASION TO SHARE WITH HIM YOUR VIEWS ON RATIONALIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION AND THE IMPORTANCE YOU ATTACH TO SELECTION OF THE YF-16.
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